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ABSTRACT

Presented are position statements and recommendations by the Education Committee of the National Association for Retarded Citizens resulting from a review of teacher certification requirements in all 50 States. It is concluded that a given State's certification requirements are subject to varying interpretations, and that State certification is presently imprecise, nonstandardized, and confusing when viewed nationally. The following recommendations are reported: States should adopt a common language pertaining to certification; universal reciprocity should be endorsed by all States; all teachers of the mentally retarded should meet standard minimal certification requirements; minimal requirements should show competency in areas such as basic knowledge and teaching methods; teacher training institutions should be responsible for judging the teaching competence of graduates; and teacher training should be governed by standards for admission, advancement, retention, and due process. Appended are suggestions for the following areas of teacher education: basic knowledge, methods and techniques, curriculum, and demonstration. (DB)

TEACHER PREPARATION AND CERTIFICATION

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Position Statements and Recommendations concerning the preparation and certification of persons who teach mentally retarded students.

Adopted by the Board of Directors
National Association for Retarded Citizens
October, 1973.

Preface

The NARC Education Committee drafted the following position statements and recommendations after carefully reviewing teacher certification requirements in all 50 states. Subsequently, the statements were adopted by the NARC Board of Directors on October 30, 1973.

The Committee is now soliciting responses to these position statements from national agencies, state departments of education, certification boards, and colleges and universities having teacher preparation programs, as well as interested individuals. Please address your reactions to: Dr. Walter J. Cegelka, Chairman, NARC Education Committee, University of Missouri-St. Louis, 8001 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, Missouri 63120.

We urge all readers to review these statements carefully and to give serious consideration to their implementation.

Dr. Walter J. Cegelka
Chairman, NARC Education Committee

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Teacher Preparation and Certification: Position Statements and Recommendations

by the

National Association for Retarded Citizens

During the Spring of 1972, the NARC Education Committee solicited information from state education agencies concerning certification requirements for teachers of mentally retarded students. Concurrently, similar surveys were conducted by The Council for Exceptional Children (1972) and Simensen and Redding (1972).

Although these independent studies had a common purpose and received 100 percent response from the states, the resulting tabulations of current certification requirements were markedly discrepant. The differences in results were seemingly attributable to: (1) considerable variation in required course titles; (2) vast differences in minimal certification requirements; (3) the use by some states of competency-based programs of certification; and (4) variation in certification terminology and structure, making it exceedingly difficult to identify a given level of certification and match specific requirements with levels.

The important findings from these studies were that a given state's certification requirements are subject to varying interpretation, and that state certification is presently imprecise, nonstandardized and confusing when viewed nationally. After carefully considering the need for greater clarity in this area, the NARC Education Committee formulated the following position statements and recommendations for consideration by the NARC Board of Directors:

1. State departments of education and certification boards must be encouraged to adopt a common language or terminology pertaining to levels and types of certification, and to work with teacher-training institutions to standardize course and/or

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competency area titles, Adherence to such a recommendation would be invaluable to accurate data collection and statistical analysis, administrative planning, program development and teacher preparation.

2. Universal reciprocity should be endorsed by all states through the adoption of standard minimal certification requirements, along the lines suggested in Appendix A. Adherence to this recommendation would allow teachers to move from state to state without having to take additional superfluous course work in order to be certified.

3. All teachers of mentally retarded students should meet standard minimal certification requirements and have completed a bachelor degree program in a recognized college or university. The use of provisional or temporary certifications must be discontinued. Adherence to this recommendation would inhibit the ever-present practice of "teach now – learn later," and complies with the present policy of NARC; i.e., "Teachers of retarded children should be highly qualified individuals who are especially trained to deal with the full range of educational needs of all retarded persons. Special education teachers should meet at least the same technical and personal qualifications as their counterparts working with non-retarded pupils." (NARC, 1971)

4. Standard minimal requirements for certification should be the successful completion of competencies in: (a) a basic body of knowledge of mental retardation; (b) methods and techniques of teaching mentally retarded persons; (c) curriculum for mentally retarded students; and (d) demonstration of teaching competence with mentally retarded students. The demonstration of competence con-

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cerning the above areas is more important than course completion or accumulation of credit hours. Whether the teacher-training institution is using a course-credit-hour structure or competency-based, field-test approach, the end product should be a teacher knowledgeable in the field of special education, specifically in the areas of mental retardation; a teacher who knows what to teach; a teacher who knows how to teach; and a teacher who has demonstrated at least a minimal degree of teaching competency as judged by the teacher-training institution.

5. Teacher-training institutions should be held responsible for judging the teaching competence of their graduates and communicate endorsement, in writing, to the state certification board. The training institution must also accept the responsibility for selecting, screening, training and evaluating educations. Therefore, adherence to this recommendation would leave the quality of teaching competency with the training institution.

6. Teacher training should be viewed as consisting of several distinct stages and processes, each of which should be governed by appropriate procedures and standards.

   - **Admission** to special education training programs, within whatever internal pattern or organization is deemed suitable, should require that students make formal application to a faculty committee before taking more than the briefest introductory course. The application process should consist of providing information concerning the quality of previous studies, work experiences, and reasons for requesting admission to a training program. In addition, a committee of

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professors should interview students individually so that personality, speech, physical and other characteristics may be appraised. Of course, such appraisal may indicate the possibility of remedial steps to correct professionally unsuitable characteristics.

- **Advancement** is a second important aspect of the teacher-training process, connoting that a student is making satisfactory progress, and has been so recognized. In this regard, students in a training program should maintain steady and demonstrable progress towards completion of the training program, as reflected by annual reviews which are preferably based upon demonstrated student competence.

- **Retention** should reflect the concern that retarded children deserve competent teachers. As stated above, people who desire to work towards the goal of teaching in Special Education should be appraised and reviewed formally each year, and decision concerning retention or dismissal should be made only after suitable inquiries and interviews. Written statements of warning for those in jeopardy should be given on a timely basis, together with counseling intended to provide a basis for improvement and restoration to regular status in the training program.

- **Due Process.** In all instances where students are found to be in jeopardy at any state of the process from admission to completion of a training program, they should be given timely notification. They should also be provided with a statement of procedures for appeal of decisions they dispute in a manner

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which conforms to the spirit of due process. Students who are dismissed from training programs should be given a written statement of reasons.

The combination of the concepts, *admission, retention, advancement,* and *due process* is intended to guarantee respect for the welfare of both teachers and students engaged in the enterprise of Special Education.

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APPENDIX A

SUGGESTED AREAS OF INSTRUCTION:

In an attempt to provide state boards of certification and teacher-training institutions with some minimal suggestions on what should compose each of the four areas of instruction, we have listed the following:

BASIC KNOWLEDGE AREA: The content of the basic knowledge area should be designed to provide understanding of the retarded person in an educational framework. This course or experience should emphasize the role of education of handicapped persons, the importance of early intervention, and consideration of such issues as labeling and the treatment of culturally different students. The future teacher should be introduced to an overview of characteristics, definitions, and prevalence of various educational handicaps, as well as their social, psychological and medical correlates. Educational implications should be examined, including historical perspectives, service models and current problems. An in-depth analysis of mental retardation should be presented, including definitions, etiology, expectations, learning characteristics and current issues.

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METHODS AND TECHNIQUES AREA: This area should be designed to provide the teacher with a knowledge of one or more methods for teaching mentally retarded children, individually, in small groups, and in class-sized groups. While the methods taught may vary with the orientation of the training institution, they should be developed from sound learning theory, based on such needs of retarded students as: provisions for success and feedback, starting at the student's current level, providing reinforcement, sequencing lessons, proceeding in small steps, maintaining conceptual simplicity, teaching directively, varying presentation, adjusting the length of sessions and repeating instruction as necessary. The correct use of audio-visual aids and multi-media approaches should also be required. Any methods area must include evaluation methods and demonstration of competence.

CURRICULUM AREA: The curriculum area must be designed to develop realistic goals and appropriate activities for teaching the retarded student. Coursework in this area should be based on at least one theoretical framework by which ultimate educational goals are generated. The future educator will learn to use these outcomes to develop detailed goals and activities for the age and type of children with whom he or she will be working. Experience involving thorough practical familiarity with activities and materials, commercial and selfmade, should be presented. An approach toward evaluating materials, activities and goals with respect to the child's needs and abilities should be included.

DEMONSTRATION AREA: This area is the culminating experience in teacher preparation. Its successful completion is the single most important indication of ability to educate children. It is here that classroom knowledge is demonstrated and evaluated on a performance base. Future teachers should be placed in situations similar to those in which they expect to work. They should be working with competent personnel who have the time, desire and ability to supervise. Furthermore, they should assume all responsibilities of professional teachers. Competency in this area is to be demonstrated for no less than eight weeks of full-time teaching.

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Curriculum, methods and practicum experience should focus on retarded persons of a specific educational level and severity. Common educational divisions like those found in the January, 1973, *Action Guidelines: Evaluating and Monitoring Education Services for Mentally Retarded Persons,* and the American Association for Mental Deficiency's *Manual on Terminology and Classification* (1973), provide an educationally useful system for classifying future teachers' areas of concentration.

Future educators should gain familiarity with the depth and range of education of retarded persons, but should specifically concentrate their studies and perform their practicums in one or more related areas. If interested in teaching young mildly and moderately retarded children, for example, they would concentrate their studies in the areas of mild and moderate retardation at the pre-school and primary levels. This is not intended to mean that concentration in several areas is discouraged, provided that each area can be thoroughly covered.

When the educator graduates and begins full-time teaching, he or she would be certified in their areas of concentration by the teacher-training institution and, following suit, by the state. The educator could be certified in other levels by further coursework or experience. This would provide meaningful certification based on demonstrated ability. Therefore, the system is adaptable to competency-based programs.

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